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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations Wednesday, April 8, 1936.

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Hello folks. Last week in our Garden Calendar we discussed the growing of annual flowering plants for decorative effect around our homes. There were one or two points about the annuals that I failed to mention. One is the wonderful range of color that you can secure by planting annuals, everything from pure white in the balsam and sweet alyssum to the deepest of reds in the painted daisy, zinnia and cockscomb. Practically every color of the rainbow can be matched in the petunias and asters and the marigolds afford a variation in the shades of gold and yellow. Where you are planting climbing roses on an arbor you have to be careful that your colors harmonize but not so with the annual flowering plants and you can have a perfect riot of color in a single flower border without a single clashing or lack of harmony of color. The only exception is perhaps in the case of annuals having blue flowers, and incidentally we have very few annuals that bear distinctly blue flowers. The cornflower or batchelors button is one of the best of our blue-flowered annuals, but we get varying shades of blue in larkspur, lobelia, forget-me-not and ageratum.

Another point I failed to mention last week is the value of the annual flowering plants for cut flowers. Immense quantities of asters, marigolds, snapdragons, zinnias, cornflower, cosmos and calendula are sold annually as cut flowers and are used mainly for decorating the tables in restaurants and on home dinner tables. A great many women are making their spending money by growing and selling these annual flowers.

Our next group of flowering plants for use around the home is the herbaceous perennials. With the annuals we must start all over each spring but with the perennials we simply add to our plantings from year to year.

I suppose old-fashioned hollyhocks and peonies are two of the most popular of our herbaceous perennials, but the hardy phloxes, chrysanthemums, hardy asters, iris, sweet william, canterbury bells, golden glow, rosemallow, lily of the valley and the wide range of lilies and bulb plants in general are all worthy of consideration. Nothing short of a five-acre garden would hold them all and even then the space would be crowded.

With the great number and variety of perennials to choose from it is a question of selecting a relatively small number and giving them special attention. Personally I am very fond of the old-fashioned hollyhocks and I have clusters or groups of them growing at various points about my place. I have a small but very choice collection of about ten varieties of peonies that I take great delight in. Along the west side of our house we have a splendid bed of lily of the valley. Across a narrow strip of greensward is a bed of regal lilies and the old tiger lily. A few years ago I inherited a collection of iris. In the mixed flower borders there are hardy

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phlox, foxglove, bellflowers, chrysanthemums and permanently planted bulbs of various sorts. This mixture gives a continuation of bloom and always something to attract interest. One of the real problems is to keep the weeds from growing up and taking everything in these mixed borders but I find that if you will fertilize mainly with bone meal and peat moss that you will have less trouble with weeds.

It pays to prepare the soil carefully for a perennial border for the reason that the plants will occupy the space many years and after the border is once planted there is little opportunity for improving the soil except by the surface application of fertilizers. First of all the perennial border should be well drained and if the ground is inclined to be cold and wet it should be drained and rotted compost added to lighten the soil. A very heavy clay will be improved by working sand or sifted coal ashes into it. There is just one objection to the use of compost from the barnlot and that is that it contains weed seeds but aside from that it is the best material to use in preparing the soil.

Now the time to start some of the perennials is in the summer, then they will be ready to bloom the following season. Hardy phlox should be divided and reset in the early spring. The iris rhizomes should be divided and reset shortly after they bloom. Peonies should be lifted, divided and reset about every 6 or 7 years and the work should be done in the early fall. In setting the peonies the buds should be covered exactly 2 inches, no more and no less. Many of the failures of peonies to bloom have been due to setting them 4 and 5 inches deep. Iris rhizomes, especially these of the bearded type should be set practically on top of the ground and their leaves should be cut back to about 3 inches at the time they are reset. Hollyhocks may be started from seed which is sown in the summer as soon as the seed ripens and the little plants may be transplanted to their permanent location early in the fall. This is also true of foxglove and canterbury bells. The seeds of the hardy phlox should never be allowed to dry out but should be taken from the plants as soon as they are ripe and planted immediately in a shady, protected place where they can be kept moist. Farmers' Bulletin No. 1381 gives information on growing perennial flowering plants.

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